

bipartisan way to preserve Social Security and Medicare.

As I have said time and again when meeting with constituents, I am fully committed not only to protecting Social Security and Medicare for current and near retirees but also strengthening and preserving these programs for future generations.

I was proud to sign on to H. Res. 109, which reaffirms this commitment, and to cosponsor H.R. 82, the Social Security Fairness Act, another important measure.

Those who have paid into Social Security should not have their benefits reduced, especially given the affordability crisis impacting so many families across my district and the country, including our seniors, who are among the hardest hit by inflation and rising costs.

It is incumbent on all of us to never cease fighting for the millions of Americans who have paid into and rely on these crucial programs. We must preserve them for future generations.

STANDING WITH ORGANIZED LABOR

(Mr. MRVAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MRVAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 20, the Richard L. Trumka Protecting the Right to Organize Act of 2023, legislation that honors the name and tireless advocacy of my friend who passed away all too soon.

Throughout my career in public office, I have been proud to stand with organized labor and American workers. Unions are the backbone of the north-west Indiana economy, and we must do all we can to fight for the right to collectively bargain.

The PRO Act improves the ability for all workers to form a union and improve their ability to collectively bargain for fair wages, safe working conditions, access to healthcare benefits, and a secure retirement.

I appreciate the continued leadership of Ranking Member BOBBY SCOTT and my colleagues on the Education and Workforce Committee, and I encourage all of my colleagues to join me in standing with our workers in supporting the PRO Act.

PROTECTING CHILDREN

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, just a few weeks ago, I declared this year the year of the child. In the course of that moment, I have seen the abuse of children around the world.

In Ukraine, Russia has stolen 700,000 children, all the way to the United States of America and the State of Texas, where the State education agency is attempting to take over the sev-

enth-largest school district in the Nation, the Houston Independent School District, where the children have been performing at their very best, even in spite of the pandemic.

There has been a law that was passed that suggested that if the schools had a number of years of what we call failing grades, then it would immediately throw them into the hands of the State agency that has no capability of running a school system; no capability of dealing with teachers and raising their salaries; no capability of dealing with parents, support staff, and excellent children and their performance.

I am asking the U.S. Department of Education and President Biden to step in to protect school districts across America and to keep them from the political football that happens with Republican Governors who are attempting to make an example of these school districts.

These children are brilliant. They can learn. They are majority-minority, and they can learn. I believe it is important that school districts be allowed to teach with the teachers' and parents' lead and not to be taken over by a board of managers that answers to no one.

DEFENDING VOTING RIGHTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LUTTRELL). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of today's Special Order, which is voting rights.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK. Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor that I rise today to coanchor the CBC Special Order hour along with my distinguished co-lead, Representative JACKSON.

For the next 60 minutes, members of the CBC will have an opportunity to speak directly to the American people on voting rights, an issue of great importance to the Congressional Black Caucus, Congress, constituents we represent, and all Americans.

In 2018, Florida voters overwhelmingly approved Amendment 4, with more than 64 percent of the voters. This historic constitutional amendment automatically restored voting rights to most Floridians with past convictions who had completed the terms of their sentence.

Before this vote, Florida was one of only four States that enacted permanent felony disenfranchisement, which affected about 1.7 million felons.

However, in June 2019, Governor Ron DeSantis signed a misguided law that prohibited returning citizens from voting unless they pay off certain legal financial obligations imposed by a court pursuant to a felony conviction.

This abhorrent, undemocratic law has created a pay-to-vote system in the State of Florida and overwhelmingly targets Black and Brown communities.

Florida has no centralized system to tell what a person might owe, so it is often impossible for people with past convictions and election officials to know who is eligible to vote.

Last year, the DeSantis administration started prosecuting people with past convictions for making honest mistakes about their eligibility, intimidating potential voters, and further undermining the rights that Amendment 4 gave to millions of Floridians.

Many of the people arrested were told by local election officials that they were eligible to vote. Due to the confusing law that Tallahassee Republicans put into law, these officials mistakenly misled these individuals by telling them that they were eligible to vote.

Armed with the new election police unit, the DeSantis administration arrested 20 people who were among the 11 million Floridians who voted in the 2020 election.

The Republicans in Tallahassee and Washington are using fear and misinformation to disenfranchise millions of voters because they know their policies are not popular.

It is time that Governor DeSantis and the Florida Legislature honor the will of our constituents and implement Amendment 4 as it is written.

It is now my privilege to yield to the gentlewoman from Alabama (Ms. SEWELL).

Ms. SEWELL. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to join with my CBC colleagues in commemorating the 58th anniversary of Bloody Sunday and to call on my colleagues to take action to protect our most valuable and sacred right to vote.

As the daughter of Selma, Alabama, it was in my hometown of Selma, exactly 58 years ago, where John Lewis and the foot soldiers shed blood on the Edmund Pettus Bridge for the equal right of all Americans to vote.

It was in Selma where ordinary Americans peacefully protested so that every American could enjoy the full promise of our democracy.

It was in Selma where these brave foot soldiers were met with tear gas and unspeakable violence, but we know that their sacrifice was not in vain.

Indeed, it was the courage and tenacity of those brave foot soldiers that brought us the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and provided Federal oversight to ensure that no State could restrict the right to vote based on the color of a person's skin.